From the life of Philipp Mainländer

Extracts from the philosopher's manuscript autobiography
By Dr. Fritz Sommerlad (Giessen)

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The author of the equally rich and peculiar "*Philosophy of Redemption*", which work I have briefly reviewed elsewhere,[1] has left behind a coherent account of his tragically short life among his papers, which is able to give us an exceptional understanding of his quite singular character. This life also contains, in part, the key to full comprehension of Mainländer's philosophical views; and particularly for this reason, I believe to be doing the readers of this journal a welcome service by disclosing the most important things from those interesting notes, using the gracious permission of Mister Georg Hübscher[2] in Cologne, the owner of his literary remains. Mainländer himself intended his diary for publication; but then he died, and his sister, who revised and published the second volume of his chief work, did not get to publish the biography either. There is also the question of whether it is suitable for introduction to a broader readership; the author, too, remarked at its end, "Criticism (of this biography) would be well-justified: I told many things that can be of interest only to myself. For those incidental remarks, I apologise. I did not leave them out because I was also writing for myself."

Many a detail from his life, many a little trait of character, and many a well-made depiction would surely make its author even more precious to his supporters, friends, and fellow countrymen; but for now, I can ignore this – his personality stands out in all its depth, greatness and purity this way nonetheless.

So as not to weaken the impression of the original, I will let the author speak for himself to the extent possible; I will also refrain from the attempt of characterising my compatriot: I will restrict myself to the humble task of mere informing.[3]

A short overview of the philosopher's outer life for a start! Philipp Batz (his actual name) was born on 5th October 1841 in Offenbach am Main. He was the youngest of five siblings: three sons and two daughters. He received his first education at the Realschule in Offenbach. In 1856, he got into the Handelsschule [commercial school] in Dresden. On 1st June 1858, he travelled via France to Italy to take a position in a Neapolitan trading house. There he stayed for more than 5 years. Then he returned to Offenbach and worked in the business of his father.[4] In 1868, he went to Berlin, where he found a position in the banking house Martin Magnus. In 1872, he left Berlin, re-

1 Vol. 109, no. 2 of this journal, pp. 277 et seqq.

2 The publisher of *The Philosophy of Redemption*.

3 I listed the main literature on Mainländer in a work on his critique of Kant, which will be published in the "*Kantstudien*" ["*Kant Studies*"] in the near future. [It was published in *Kantstudien*, vol. 3, 1898/1899, pp. 424–433, and can be read here.]

4 TN: His father was the owner of a leather factory.

turned to Offenbach, and then, once again, accepted an employment offer from Berlin. In 1874, he completed his chief work in Offenbach, and voluntarily joined the Halberstadt cuirassiers afterwards. Having returned to Offenbach on 1st November 1875, he brought his work to completion with a second volume, and committed suicide in late March 1876.

Mainländer is aware that it was by birth and ancestry that he received many of the things that made him contrast with his surrounding world. He therefore gives a "tour of his ancestral gallery" in his biography, and relates his "life before birth" in a few lines. He traces some of his traits back to his ancestors with the following altered verses of Goethe:

> "Der Vater gab ein gutes Herz,
> Mitleid mit Mensch und Tieren.
> Die Mutter melancholisch Blut
> Und Lust, zu spekulieren.
> Urahnherr war voll wildem Trotz,
> Das spukt so hin und wieder,
> Urahnfrau liebte myst'sche Glut,
> Das zuckt wohl durch die Glieder."
>
> ["My father gave a noble heart
> And sympathy for man and creature;
> My mother, melancholic blood
> And joy in speculative venture.
> Grandfather brimmed with wild defiance,
> This sometimes holds the reins;
> Grandmother did love mystic feelings,
> This might run through my veins."]

The disclosure that, driven by certain circumstances (a downright novel), his maternal grandmother got married without love casts a curious light upon the origins of his doctrine of world redemption through "virginity". He says, "I attach great weight to the latter fact, for only it makes the main feature of my mother's character explainable to me. She entered marriage with great aversion and was so reserved and chaste in it that it seemed as if she were not a woman, but a young girl." About his grandmother, it is stated that she saw her first lover, a French officer, again later in life, and then fell into silent apathy; following this, she dedicated herself to religion with all her soul, which is said to have caused deep internalisation until her overwrought emotional life sunk into a sea of mysticism and broke out into visionary seeings.

He speaks of a similar trait in his mother. "When she was a girl", he says, "she was the most beautiful in Offenbach. She was an ingenious woman; but the diamond in her gorgeously formed skull remained uncut, the pearl in her head was not thoroughly refined during her youth. If that significant intelligence, that marvellous fantasy had been fertilised by arts and science, a poetess would have appeared whose glory could stand the comparison to Sappho and Corinna." As mentioned above, she was also driven into marriage against her will. On the occasion of these reports, Mainländer states that he touches on this matter only out of scientific interest, with the same aversion with which one leaves the body of a dear deceased person to doctors for dissection. "When she became a woman, the girl cloaked herself with a second impenetrable veil; a veil of reflection joined the veil of instinct. Horrible fights had to take place under the planets'

most hostile greeting. In this, Kaulbach's great sketch "Die Erzeugung des Dampfes" ["The Creation of Steam"][5] occurs to me. We all bear the imprint of a wild conflict. We are not children of love, but children of marital rape."

After the mother, who was first passionate and then silently devoted to Christ, had given birth to two sons and two daughters, of whom one son was born with great pain, the doctors, as Mainländer says, asserted that another birth would bring her into asylum forever. "When she felt herself becoming a mother again, she fell into the deepest melancholy; she stared into the cold night of insanity in horror." The doctors' claim proved false; she happily, though with difficulty, gave birth to her fifth child – her son Philipp.

A few words about the grandfather and the father. Mainländer remembers the former as "an old silver-haired man with big blue friendly eyes." According to his acquaintances, he was a gentle man; forgiving, pleasant, polite, sensitive, good-hearted – the downright opposite of his maternal grandfather, "old Heim", a fiery, wild, hot-tempered man. He was a silversmith. From him, his son inherited "the good heart and the perfect sense for forms."

Among Mainländer's siblings was one – a talented, fiery, visually creative brother – who committed suicide before him; and another – a highly gifted sister, who was his helper, co-worker, co-thinker, and the publisher of the second volume of *The Philosophy of Redemption* – who did so later.

The father first wanted the boy to become a chemist, and later, a businessman. On the advice of Gutzkow, who was friends with the family, Philipp came to the commercial school in Dresden; there, he lived with Prof. Dr. Helbig – the head teacher of the Kreuzschule,[6] for whom the pupil preserved limitless admiration – by rent. About him, Mainländer says, "How I adore the workings of fate for having led me to that excellent man. As he discovered a lively thirst for knowledge in me, he took me by his loyal hand and, to an elaborate plan, led me into the great intellectual universe. He was not one of the cursed teachers who, as Jean Paul put it,[7] give the draught earlier than the thirst. He granted my young soul quiet hours. He did not let me step into the great realm of truths and beauties prematurely with unripe organs, and carefully prepared a 'great year' for me." Helbig tried to convince the father to let his son switch over [to the Kreuzschule]; old Batz did not agree. Mainländer is content with this. A remarkable passage about that: "Incidentally, I also adore the workings of fate for this. Standing upon the best foundation, I later continued my studies by myself, and made it further this way than I could have made it with all the universities in the world. Moreover, I had seen the world as a merchant, acquired a comprehensive, worldly eye for things, and been spared from the poisonous breath of the philosophy professors and dry, worm-like, myopic scholarship – the bookishness that Heraclitus disdained."

He acquired aesthetic education in Prof. Hettner's lectures on arts and aesthetics, and from diligent visiting of galleries and theatres. At the commercial school, he especially admired Dr. Odermann. "If I had not got to the commercial school", Mainländer says, "but some dull mercantile office, a clear philosopher would have turned into a confused prophet or a strange saint. In Dresden, I got strength and spur for my imagination and sharp, well-seeing eyes, which set themselves on a fixed goal and did not let go

5 TN: Here's a link to a digital version: https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/fuchs/erokunst/bilder/x0149.jpg

6 TN: An old Protestant school in Dresden.

7 TN: This passage paraphrases one in the "11. Cycle" of Jean Paul's *Titan* (cf. pp. 76–77 in Charles T. Brooks' translation).

of it until it was reached." Regarding the influence of Gutzkow, whose family was (as mentioned earlier) acquainted with him, he discloses the following: "I associated with the keenly negating mind of Gutzkow,[8] whose star was shining brightest back then. Even though I visited him very seldom – which was my fault only, since the lovely countrywoman (Gutzkow's second wife, a Frankfurter) would at all times receive me in the most cordial manner, and the 'great man' kept company with the insignificant student of commerce –, I always returned home with a considerable amount of stimulus and animating inspiration. To tell the truth, Gutzkow's sardonicism towards others (not towards me) repelled me terribly and often made me head back home already standing in front of his door. Whoever saw and got to know him at that time will agree with me."

During that time in Dresden, Mainländer composed the drama "*Tarik*" (which is extant among his papers[9]); he describes it as "naturally, of no poetical value"; but as interesting insofar as it is an eloquent witness of his early fights of doubt against faith and of his very old Lessingian religious tolerance.

In 1858, he took a position in Naples, and after he had begged his tender mother to let him go – "she gave in, in the end, but with deep grief" – he departed on 1st June. Italy made an indescribable impression on him; he got all familiar with it and came to know the country and its people through and through in the course of the five years of his stay. During his initially very secluded life, he worked a lot for himself after business hours, learnt Italian and Neapolitan, and read Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso, and Leopardi. "Leopardi", he says, "attracted me the most. When I read the words 'quest' uomo si portò intatto uce sepolcro il fiore della sua verginità'[10] in his biography, my soul trembled." Many excursions were taken. A number of poems were created, mostly in antique metre.[11]

In his biography, Mainländer introduces the year of 1859 with these words: "In this year, the love of my soul (for a girl from Offenbach) was shaken down to the roots, and my heart received two deadly wounds. They have scarred over by now, but they still hurt from time to time. My soul wore a light black crape from then on, which a thicker one joined later." He learnt that his brother took his own life in Messina – in a letter Mainländer did not receive until later, he implored him to come to him; and in a second one, told him that he would kill himself because he did not come. At the same time, he learnt that the girl of his silent love had become engaged. He got into complete anguish of mind and, true to an old inclination of his, wanted to become a soldier and seek death on the battlefield. The peace of Villafranca made this impossible for him. "I sank into deep melancholy and found solace only in the magnificent nature and in poetry." Later, he sought distraction; he joined the "Deutscher Verein" ["German Association"] and helped establish an aesthetic circle, in which mainly Italian classics, usually dramas, were read. In the year of 1860, he made a six-month journey for the business, during which he visited the most beautiful countries of Europe and saw his family. He was reading Schopenhauer on the way. He reports the following about how he came to his writings: "Among other things, Dr. Helbig said this in his farewell speech: 'I especially warn you against philosophy. Let the poetical literature of all times and peoples and the fragrance of the flower in your soul beautify your life and take away your worries. That

8 TN: He was a writer, whose works were largely banned in the German Confederation due to the liberal and anti-religious ideas they contained.

9 TN: And published in vol. 4 of the German edition of his works.

10 TN: "This man took the unspoiled flower of virginity to his grave."

11 TN: See "*Aus dem Tagebuch eines Dichters*" (a collection of Mainländer's poetry compiled by his sister and published in *Schriften*, vol. 4; like all his published works, it's freely available here).

is your realm, for which you have drive and talent. Avoid philosophy, however, like the plague.' The demon, though, the demon in me! He had a will of his own and forced it through. I had barely been in Naples for six months when I bought and eagerly devoured Spinoza. The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, which is written so clearly and comprehensibly, stirred a revolution in me. It was as if a thousand veils fell from my eyes, as if impenetrable morning fogs were sinking down and I saw the bright sun rising. I was seventeen years old, and how I must adore the workings of fate for that great man's treatise having been the first philosophical work to get into my hands. Spinoza's opinions on natural law and state became ingrained in me straight away, and when I later faced the miserable blather of other philosophers on these important matters, I was armoured thrice against falsehood and stupidity.

I did not understand the *Ethica*. I was too immature to grasp it. But I carefully read it line by line, very attentively, very slowly, often lowering the book and pondering over a single sentence for hours. Demonically unconsciously, however, my inner nature rebelled against pantheism already then. I felt that a god in the world would *never* satisfy me. This aversion evolved further in silence.

Spinoza's life fascinated me. I took the dear one as an example, and often, very often, the archetype of a genuine practical philosopher was my rescue from great danger.

Then, in February 1860, the great, the most important day of my life came. I entered a bookshop and paged through the books that had newly arrived from Leipzig. Thus I find Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation*. Schopenhauer? Who was Schopenhauer? I had never heard that name. I browse through the book, I read about the denial of the will to live, and find many familiar quotes in a text which entrances me. I forget my surroundings and get lost in the book. Eventually, I ask, 'How much is this book?' '6 ducats.' 'There you are.' I grasp my treasure and rush home like a madman, where I cut open the first volume in a frantic hurry and begin to read from the beginning. It was broad daylight when I stopped; I had been reading the whole night without a break. I stood up and felt myself reborn. That was another stimulus of mind than Büchner's *Force and Matter*, which book I had already read in Offenbach, had provided me with – that was a different kind of work than Oersted's *The Soul in Nature*, which I had been adoring as the absolute truth for a long time. I was in the strangest state. I foresaw that I was going to have an intimate relationship with that Schopenhauer; that something of inestimable importance had entered my life. And was it not sheer coincidence that let me make his acquaintance? If I had entered the bookshop just a quarter of an hour later, I would not have found the book; and what would have become of me then? I shudder to imagine the consequences of this, to imagine me having studied Hegel before Schopenhauer at that time when my brain preserved every impression so loyally. And the danger was there; I had already promised a dear friend of mine, an ardent admirer of Hegel, to buy *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

However young I might have been, however boundlessly I got to admire Schopenhauer in the course of my reading, I opposed him heavily on many points already then. I even smiled about his political views, pityingly, on the basis of Spinoza. I condemned his half monism instinctively, without mental clarity; on the other hand, I agreed with his remarks about individuality with full, clear conviction. They made my developing philosophical string resonate brightly, and satisfied me deeply. On my journey, I read the work a second time. It was my Pallas Athena and made my journey worthwhile. How many precious things I would have just passed by, and in how many

pits, which I would have found Erinyes for a whole life in, I would have fallen without it!"

He continued to study Schopenhauer after his return to Italy.

"I bought all of his immortal works and took them in into my soul as a ferment. The time for a philosophical work of my own had not come yet. I did not even make a single note. With many views of the great man, I agreed, many I opposed heavily; but everything stayed in my head and did not find its way onto paper."

The young philosopher did not live as withdrawn as he used to anymore; he was an eager member of the German rowing club, participated in a republican, politically and aesthetically active society which bore the scary name "Räuberbande" ["Robber Band"], and was not a downcast killjoy at excursions, drinking bouts and dances at all. At the end of 1862, he was preparing himself for a journey to Rome, which would end his stay in Italy. Later, he saw the fact that he had to leave the beautiful country as an advantage; but at the time, of course, he was very sorrowful about it. I will put the words on this matter, which are to be found in the diary, here; they prove his deep sense of home which he also expressed in his work, especially in the second volume. "I bless my fate for having wrested me from Armida's gardens. For if I had remained there, what would I be now? I will characterise myself, going by only one aspect of many: I would be one of those pitiful fellows who do not have a fatherland anymore, who, drowning in the magic of Italy, are neither proper Italians nor proper Germans. When they visit Germany, they look down on all they see, because they have lost the right viewpoint for everything; they have lost one of the most valuable treasures of a man: the burning sentiment of patriotism. Scorn and laugh at this great and glorious Germany, you German-Americans, German-Englishmen, German-Italians, and consider yourself the wisest of the wise, the luckiest of the lucky – I would not trade with you for all the gold in the world. Not for all the joys of this world and of paradise would I leave the sacred soil I was born and nursed on; there, at the 'breast of the state', is where I belong. You poor people who prefer the bliss at the blue bays of Naples or the chainless freedom in the United States over the closeness to your beautiful, sweet, even if not flawless mother; you foolish enthusiasts who declare the whole world your fatherland, and, in doing so, forget that only he can work for mankind who has a solid national ground and who, at times, can dream at the bosom of the small piece of land that his cradle stood in." He bids farewell to Naples with these words: "I do not want to see Naples again. If I were to see it again, my memory of it would lose its lustre; it would be like a butterfly whose light wing dust has been swiped off. The impression of the adult shall not repaint the impression of the young senses, of the adolescent eye. You, blissful dream of my most beautiful youth, shall shine on purely and unspoiledly and chastely within me until my last hour, as you have been shining in the shrine of my soul."

He then travelled to Rome (1863), which impressed him mightily. I will put a little passage from the description of the said stay here: Upon the occasion of visiting the church Santa Maria degli Angeli, he spotted the statue of Saint Bruno. He was fascinated: "I know this for certain: If we still lived in the Middle Ages, I would become a Carthusian monk. The statue is embodied holiness, embodied peace of heart, embodied homesickness for a better world. Christianity is the purest revelation of God through the human heart; the purest revelation through reason is yet to come."

He set off for his home. "When Italy had sunken behind me and I was looking down into the rugged Reuss Valley, I got the feeling that the time when I 'played blissfully in the sunshine of God's favour' was over and that the hard struggle of life was be-

ginning. This feeling lasted long, until the ‘it has to be’ defeated the melancholy and awoke the trust in my own strength. And it awoke mightily; my surging blood greeted the kindred rough air of the homeland.”

At home, he lived “like a prisoner”, without any converse, almost never leaving the house, in more and more tender and intimate contact with his ailing mother. “The ascetic trait, around which the blue bay had spun enchanting golden threads, grew mightily within me.” I also want to cite an interesting passage which is important for his “Politics”: a conversation with his mother. He argued with her, half-jokingly: “You claim to be a Christian; yet, you are still attached to the world with a thousand thick ropes; to money, property, reputation, etc. Now this I explain to you: These ropes have to be cut through completely if you want to follow your saviour. He who wants to follow him is not allowed to *look back*; he even demands not to love your children any more than him – indeed, not to love them at all.” – “My children”, she exclaimed, her eyes glinting like those of an offended lioness. “Christ does not demand that, he *could* not have demanded that.” “Yes, yes, he does! You can prove this easily with his speeches, and you know this as well as I do. But you bury your head in the sand, like the ostrich, and do not *want* to see. You are a heathen, a worldling, a big sinner, and will go to hell one day.” And what was the answer? “If only I have my children there, I will be content!” – “Already then”, Mainländer comments on this, “though only as a foam on a turbid stream of thoughts, the conviction arose in me that the forceful instinct of maternal love must eradicated from humanity if its redemption is to become possible. The ‘how’, however, was completely covered by night for me.”

Hard struggles and worries now began for him, mainly in his family. “The defiant, passionate individuals were rubbing and bumping up against each other, and my twenty-two-year-old hands had to concentrate the wild forces in me upon one spot. Was I an angel? Nothing less than that. I had the same blood in me that was boiling in everyone, wild Heimian blood; but education and my philosophical studies gave me incredible command over myself. Often, I stood there, pale, shaking, with clenched hands, but not a single word would pass my lips, whilst the others were pouring out their whole hearts. This gave me great superiority.”

The end of 1863 aroused his enthusiasm for Schleswig-Holstein. He did not, however, undertake his military training together with the Offenbach Turners.[12] “My individuality imperatively demanded the lonely path.” So as not to make his mother anxious, he pretended to want to learn fencing, but let himself be “drilled” militarily by a subofficer instead; he expressly told him not to go easy on him, that he did not want to play.

In 1864, he composed his *The Last Hohenstaufens.*[13] During his last years in Italy, he was particularly occupying himself with German medieval history; the fate of the Hohenstaufens, especially of the last ones – Enzo, Manfred, and Conradin – intrigued him. He had already been sketching the work in his mind in Italy, often still wandering around in bright moonlit nights on the ground they fought and suffered on. On 4th January 1864, “the muse kissed him”. He wrote *Enzo* in a very short time. In the spring of 1865, the composition of *Manfred* took place – “I was happy while writing it” – in May 1866, that of *Conradin* followed. “The seeds of philosophy that had fallen into me were lying dormant in this and the following year (1864–1865). I occasionally read Schopenhauer’s works, like a pious man reads the Bible: for strength. I had too many

12 TN: The German *Turners* were liberal and nationalistic clubs which practised gymnastics.

13 Leipzig, Schmidt & Günther, undated.

worries and the poetical urge was too active to be able to approach Schopenhauer's work critically. For this, a terrible stirring was needed, and it came."

Returning from a short Rhine journey in 1865, he found his mother dying. She passed away on his birthday, as a result of a disease his birth had caused. Mainländer remarks on this, "Are there differences in the feeling of love, in the enthusiasm of the heart? Certainly not. There are only differences in the *motives*. To all motives that cause great love, the heart always responds with the same emotion pouring out, and only from the viewpoint of the motives can one speak of child's love, sexual love, parental love, patriotic love, Christian love, etc. And thus I know that all I had felt towards the female sex found its downfall and its transfigured resurrection in the feeling that united me with my mother. The remembrance of *her* is *my* undissolvable marriage. She was my mother, my wife, my child, in the most ideal sense of the words, and although I may appear like a lonely bachelor from the outside, I have wife and child, and what a wife, what a child!"

His mother's death only tightened the bond of his duties. He lived a solitary life for three more years; at times, he roamed the nearby fields and forests. "'An eccentric!', the good people of Offenbach would say with a shrug when I rushed past them." Coming to the creation of *Conradin*, he remarks, "I wrote it already knowing that poetry is only a means for philosophy for me; another way of expressing myself. The 'Last Hohenstaufens' were poetical philosophy of history to me; a depiction of the historical law that everything in life, as well as life itself, is just a means for a divinely intended end. When the means is worn out, the divine breath throws it away. My mother's death got me over a thousand stones in my path and took me further than the previous 24 years taken together. Now not a day went by without me lending words and clearly reasoned sentences to my opposition against Schopenhauer. The folder with loose sheets of my critique was becoming fuller and fuller, and my chief work already showed itself to my mind's eye in faint outlines. I had Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism* and his *Eastern Monachism* brought to me from England and immersed myself in Buddhism. In addition, I studied the German medieval mystics (*Theologia Germanica*, Tauler, Silesius) and old German literature; particularly, the strikingly deep *Parzival* of great Wolfram."

The events of 1866[14] stirred him in the midst of these studies. He decided to join the Prussian army, but the rapid decision at Königgrätz deprived him of the possibility to do so. More about these various attempts to become a soldier further below! In 1868, his father sold his factory, which Mainländer had been managing; he was thus freed from business obligations; after other failed attempts to join the army, he decided to get to know the financial profession better and after five months finally found a suitable position in Berlin. "I did not dream away this waiting time," Mainländer continues. "Along with very thorough language studies, I immersed myself in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* for the first time. The fact that I delved into this most important work of philosophy only at the age of 27, with mature intellectual organs, which also had not been poisoned by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, but rather critically steeled by Schopenhauer, is something I cannot ascribe enough importance to for my cultivation. However, I must confess that I read it in an almost merely mechanical manner the first and second time. For me, it was words, words, words; their spirit would not come over me. I had the *feeling* that I was standing in front of a gold mine, but I saw no gold."

"When I," he concludes the report about this whole time, "look back on my almost five-year stay in Offenbach – that is, on a hermit's life – I praise my fate. It was

14 TN: The Austro-Prussian War, which ended with the Battle of Königgrätz.

only then that my character traits became ingrained in me. I clung to nothing but my individuality."

In Berlin, he continued to live solitarily and by himself; of his fields of study, he lists the following: German poetry, history, sociopolitics, natural history (based on Oken), anthropology, and the rather important philosophers: Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Scotus Erigena, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Hobbes, Helvetius, Fichte, Hegel, Herbart, Condillac, etc. "I was attaching myself to Schopenhauer more and more closely. In an hour of enthusiasm, I vowed, 'I will be your Paul', and I have kept my word."

The war of 1870 made a strong impact on him. "The feelings the war evoked in my breast were the birth pangs of my *Philosophy of Redemption*."

In 1871, his sister came to him and stayed there until he left the town. In 1872 he made the decision to give up his position and retire. He saw a great means to an end in his merchanthood. "Underneath its veil, without greenhouse warmth, that which I must see as the purpose of my life was ripening; indeed, I repeat, it even affected maturity by forcing me to abstract and clear thinking. It will always remain true that every significant philosophical flower can only blossom on the soil of an honest craft: the breath of the leisure hours is its vital air, and for this reason, the dilettantes are the greatest and strongest servants of truth. One can even apply this rule to art, nay, to all science. He who works for wages, but *sacrifices* to the spirit of art and science, he alone is on the right path, and a thousandfold reward will be his for this sacrifice."

In order to inform about the following events of the years 1873 and 1874 in excerpts, I will use the 1st part of the biography, in which Mainländer mainly speaks of his urge to become a soldier and of his military life; the important report on the completion of his work is also to be found there.

"I already wanted to become a soldier when I was 14 years old," he says. "The boyish joy in the uniform's sheen was as little the motive of my wish as was the imagination of the duties of an army in times of peace and war. When I think myself back to that time and reflect on my condition, I can only say that I was driven by a wild demon that mindlessly rushed to a goal. The curious thing is that this instinct sometimes revealed itself. Shortly after my request was outright refused by my parents, I said to a friend, 'I have an exceptional desire to once be completely subject to another one in all things, to do the most menial work, to have to obey blindly.' This desire has repeatedly returned in my life, even though I am essentially the being most in need of freedom. I believe that at that time, the desire was related to the awakening sexual instinct, although I cannot account to myself for this connection."

In 1859, he decided to join the (Austrian) army. The war ended too soon. In 1863, he tried it again; "at that time I was deadly serious about the intention to help, and it was not instinct but conscious patriotism that underlay it. Since then, the ineradicable urge to become a soldier has been under its guidance. But there is a possibility that it has a completely different, to me inconceivable, connection with my future fate."

In 1866, he turned to the Prussian Minister of War. The Battle of Königgrätz thwarted this attempt as well. In 1868 and 1870, he once more did not achieve the goal of his wishes. An immediate petition to the Emperor in 1874, at last, was successful.

Before I continue to report on this, I have to add the events between 1872 and 1874.

In July 1872, he resigned from the business in Berlin to return to Offenbach. There he was seized by the demon of becoming a soldier, although he would rather have used the free time to draft his philosophical work, "whose material was, totally unsorted

and in utter chaos, partly in written form in front of me, and partly only on my mind." He declared to his sister that he must now strive for his goal – devotion to the public; however, he wanted to go with her to Offenbach, but it might well be that he would have to leave her again soon. She replied that she could not live alone with their father. He saw that he could not carry out his plan without causing great misfortune. "And as the demon noticed that he was to be deceived, and was just about to become unruly, the previously closed love for my philosophical work unfolded like a rosebud at the kiss of light. It grew daily until it completely captivated my mind."

Thus they arrived home. "If I now described how I completed my first draft in three months, how I then put it aside and, once more, studied Kant and Schopenhauer line by line, how I then finished a second draft, three times as large as the first one, in four months, how my understanding was growing, how, so to speak, a mountain began to slide and thus the most wonderful magic castle was disclosed to me, in which I found a thousand times more than what I had hoped for in the boldest flight of my thoughts, if I now described this, I would be able to depict the essence of fate to lead every individual safely to the bliss of redemption more clearly than anywhere else."

But now the demon spoke to him again: "Well, dear father, the stars are excellently favourable. In autumn, you will have finished your important philosophical system. You will undoubtedly feel a great emptiness inside you. How will you fill it? You have put your whole soul, all that had been fulfilling you from youth up, the entire wealth of your world of thought into the work, and, knowing you, you will never begin a new one. Is it, then, not necessary that you finally give me, and thereby also yourself, peace? The theory is complete; now, the practice must come. And what other practical act could follow the eminent theoretical one than joining the glorious German army? You are one of those rarely gifted philosophers like Cleanthes and Spinoza, who lived as they taught, aren't you; and shall I tell you the secret of your work? Your philosophical work is only the reflection of your love for me; it has inspired every word, you have glorified only me in it, and, thus, made me immortal. And that, mark it well, without having been unfaithful to truth, that chaste magnificent goddess. I have mad brothers: devilets, nay, devils. Where they operate, there people assert and, with all their strength, defend what cannot persist. But I am good and pure, I am clear and bright, and because I am thus, my vehemence, my passion, is an invaluable virtue. Is it not plainly visible: only in the connection of your mind with me were you able to write your work, and this work is so thoroughly true, though only the reflection of your love for me, because I am by nature what truth teaches: a noble-minded and free character. You have been practising what you teach in your *Ethics* for a long time, nay, you have always practised it. But what you teach in your *Politics*, total devotion to the public, this is what will crown your life. For him, who, like you, has a fiery soul, there is – since the social question is not yet going to be solved from below, as you yourself have taught – only one place, namely, that where the main movement occurs, at the spot of humanity where, in the midst of thunder and lightning and the most severe birth pangs, it throws the form and law of a new age into existence. This place is the German army."

Examining reason affirmed the decision. He decided to use the small fortune he had acquired in Berlin in such a way that his family could live freely and without worry while he was a soldier. "I now had to be finished with my draft by the end of September at the latest, and this pressure gave me an energy I had not known of in myself before. I worked with fabulous ease. Often I felt like I was just mechanically copying what an-

other mind more mighty than mine was dictating: this concentrated and wonderfully focused was my being. The joy of creation I felt at that time – how could I describe it?"

But then, the Vienna crash[15] happened – this caused Mainländer's plans to collapse. At the end of September, when he had finished the draft, it was clear to him: he could not become a soldier, he could not carry out his mission, he had to become a merchant again. He again found a position in Berlin, at the Deutsche Bank. He now became, as he says, unnaturally objective. "Putting it mildly, one part of me sat in the parterre, expectant but indifferent, to see the other part writhing and squirming on the stage like a worm. Putting it more strongly, my mind was firmly determined to perform a vivisection on me without flinching." These torments lasted for two months. Then, after severe inward struggles, he resigned from his position. "I then remained in a truly dreamlike mood for a couple of days. My mind was as though concentrated and motionless in its innermost core. Then suddenly a kindling lightning struck my heart, and I was filled with an insurmountable longing for death. And with it, a new life began for me. Until then, I had been living in absolute obedience to fate in such a way that I would have carried out its most terrible command, but not lived on *reconciled* with fate afterwards, but rather, openly railing against it; now, a period began in which I would sacrifice to fate both out of conviction and with *love*. What happened to me is the same as what the Christians call the effect of grace. Just as the heart of a Christian touched by God's grace begins glowing with faith, which enables it to accept everything God sends, good as well as bad things, with equal thanks, my soul was kindled by the long-since intellectually acquired knowledge of fate in those heavy days. The effect was the same as in the case of the divinised Christian: I no longer *worried* about the next day, but, from then on, walked in calm and ever steady *trust*. And whatever fate may bring, be it the most agonising disease or a sudden death, I know that *I* have chosen all that happens to me *before* the world for my own good." – "Hence," Mainländer concludes this paragraph, "in Berlin, where I went so reluctantly, with a torn and bleeding heart, I made a priceless acquisition that no one can rob me of."

After the resignation from his position, he initially wanted to look for another position in Frankfurt, but then, believing in his fate, decided to finally really become a soldier in autumn. A direct request to the Emperor on 6th April 1874 was successful in that he was allowed to re-enlist. After further negotiations, it was determined that he was to join the cuirassiers in Halberstadt in autumn. He had deliberately chosen the hard equestrian service. He wanted to serve for three years as a common soldier, although he had been advised to acquire the right to one-year-long service, out of the same ascetic need. In a letter to the colonel of Halberstadt, he clearly expressed his intention: "Patriotism is the first motive that works in me. The realisation that man owes his best to the state, his upbringing, his education, in short, all the foundations upon which he can reach his true destination, very early awakened gratitude towards the state in me, and the will to joyfully make the individual sacrifices necessary for its preservation and power. I am not one of those clever people who want to enjoy the advantages of the state but seek to avoid its burdens. Thus I have not been considering myself exempt from military service (he had bought himself off in Offenbach in the past, according to the prevailing custom), but only delayed by peculiar circumstances, and am enlisting now that there is no more time to lose.

15 TN: A stock market crash which marked the beginning of a far-reaching financial crisis, the Panic of 1873.

A clear look at the world's affairs and a thorough study of history teach us that even the largest nation, in spite of its independence, is only a part of mankind, which has a coherent, uniform course of development. Furthermore, it is a law of history that there is always one state that has the leading role, and this as long as it is internally entitled to it. There can be no doubt, however, that the leading role for the next period of history has come down to the so gloriously emerged German Empire, and that under the protection of its sword, universal culture will make great progress. Any strong heart that is not anymore entirely confined to the narrow circle of egoism must be kindled by this, and a fervent desire to participate when it is the time to struggle for high aims of humanity arises in it.

I want to both wholly fulfil my duty to the state *and* work for the good of humanity to the best of my ability."

The section concludes with the words, "My demon wanted this step, and my mind approved of it. This mere harmony, which is so rare, strengthened me for what awaited me. But he who has read this soldier's story carefully will also have seen that there is a much more important harmony, namely that between my will and the other side of fate, which is not in our power – *chance*. As often as it was necessary, it changed the scenery in my favour. My soul approaches what is to come with unspeakably blissful peace."

In the following summer (1874), the work "*The Philosophy of Redemption"* was being completed in Offenbach. "Now, an enchanting life began, an intellectual blossoming full of bliss and thrills of delight. This life lasted for four entire months; it filled June, July, August and September. Absolutely clear, consistent, and well-rounded, my system lay on my mind, and a creative urge animated me which did not need the whip of the thought that I *had* to be finished by 28th September, because on 1st October I *had* to put on the King's uniform. My trust in fate was downright fantastic.

My way of living was very simple. I got up at seven in the morning and worked until ten. Then I took a delighting bath in the nearby Main. The dear native stream helped me write my work. Oh how it strengthened and vitalised me! At 12 o'clock, I quickly ate lunch and then worked continuously until 7 o'clock. The hotter it was, the more comfortable I felt, the more flowing my stream of thought became. In the heat of noon, I blissfully pondered over my system. And it thrived. The *Analytic* got doubled in size, the *Physics* got completely reworked – but in its midst, I suddenly lost the thread. I got very frightened, dressed quickly and roamed the woods for four hours in the burning heat. In vain: I did not find it again! For three days, I was in hell. I lost hope and gazed at the ever approaching 28th of September in horror. I was near despair and decided to commit suicide if things would not change soon. But a gentle hand led me out of that hell. At last I found the thread, and it was brighter than ever; and from then on, I always kept it in my hand.

Thus, the months passed like days, and the work approached its completion. The *Aesthetics*, the *Ethics* and the *Politics* were almost wholly reworked; the *Metaphysics* was entirely rewritten. In the second draft, it had filled only two pages.

Finally, the work was completed.

'Now have I made me a broadsword bright,
Now may I cope with the boldest knight;
Now may I slay, like a hero brave,

Giants and dragons in field and cave!'
[Uhland, *Siegfried's Sword;* translated by W. W. Skeat]

So it was. I felt with bliss that I had made a *bright sword*, but at the same time, I felt icy shudders because I took a path more dangerous than that of any philosopher before me. I was attacking mighty giants and dragons, everything established, everything sacred and venerable in state and science: God, the monster of 'the infinite', the species, the forces of nature, the modern state, and only validated the individual and egoism in my naked atheism. But no, – on both lay the splendour of the pre-worldly unity, of God, the irresistible driving force that guides all the dynamically connected things of the world; or, to speak with Christ, the Holy Spirit, the greatest and most important of the three divine beings. Indeed, 'brooding with the wings of a dove', it lay over the only real thing in the world, the individual and its egoism, until it expires in eternal peace, in absolute nothingness."

His sister was to look for a publisher. He never wanted to be named as the author of the work, according to his letter to the future publisher. "For this work, I am Philipp Mainländer, and I want to be it until my death and for all time."

At the end of August, the *Philosophy of Redemption* was completed in fair copy. He still had some time left before his departure, and so a new thought arose in him. When he was speaking to his sister about the "*Frankforter"*[16] and imagined him as a Teutonic Knight – "I see him standing at the open window of the second floor of the *Deutschherrenhaus* on the bank of the *Main* in *Sachsenhausen*, his noble, mild features being transfigured by the gold of the setting sun. He is wearing a steel doublet which glints under his white robe." – he got the idea "to found a free university, which, in my mind, quickly took the shape of a *modern spiritual chivalric order*, a philosophical order of fighters of fate, of knights of the Holy Spirit. My *theoretical* act was done. The *practical* one was initiated. It was begun *unconsciously* by the demon. Should the *conscious* continuation result in this order?" Thus he drafted the statutes of an "Order of the Holy Spirit (*Order of the Grail*)", which are to be found in the 2nd volume of the *Philosophy of Redemption*.

The last days of September were approaching. On the 26th, a beautiful, cloudless autumn day, he visited his mother's grave. He broke a twig and, laying his hand on the mound, in a concentrated and most serene mood, he vowed virginity until his death. "How I had loved the old woman down there! How I still consumingly and exclusively loved the image of my passionate, ingenious mother! How she suffered, how ferocious she was in her pain! How stubbornly twitching and shuddering, how proudly this great individuality abode in demonic piety! She often wrestled with God, like Jacob, and defeated Him. For instance, as she told it, with her ardent prayers, she wrested her second son from God, who had doomed him to death, and who could *not believe* her when she was speaking. And this woman with her passionate motherly love later had to *regret* that she had reclaimed her child from the hands of God![17] I thought about how the raging, foaming sea in her has become smooth and blue in me. Was it not the same sea? Wonderfully strengthened for all the gloom that was awaiting me in Halberstadt, I left the garden of the dead which was lying in the rays of the setting sun."

And now, the military life followed! This whole soldier's story is highly interesting, especially for those who know our army from their own time of service. Main-

16 TN: The anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica*.
17 TN: It was this second son, Daniel, who later took his own life in Messina.

länder was as good a comrade as he was a capable soldier. He did the hard service of a common soldier. After the manoeuvres, as a lance corporal, he left the army, to which he initially wanted to belong for three years, for urgent reasons.[18] I will only share a few particularly characteristic things from this time.

Equipped with a small collection of books, he travelled to Halberstadt: with an English, a French and an Italian grammar, a French dictionary, Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, Tacitus, Gil Blas, Leopardi, an arithmetical guide and a German grammar ("for possible instruction of poor comrades and ambitious subofficers") and the "*Theologia Germanica*". With the following words, he depicts the peculiar situation of his entry:

"In a few days, on 5th October, I would turn 33, and I was to be a recruit among boys of 19 and 22! I descended from comfortable bourgeois circumstances to the arduous and burdensome conditions of soldiering. I had almost solely worked with my pen and my head and revelled with the geniuses of all times – now I was to brush horses, muck the stable, swing the sabre and be content with the narrow circle of thought of the lowermost social classes. I loved solitude and, like a touch-me-not, shrank back into my individuality from the lightest external touch: I passionately loved the greatest noiseless silence, and now I was to live in barracks for three long years. No one could and can have a more untameable urge for freedom than I – the air of freedom is part of my existence – and now I was to be placed under the absolute sway of eighteen-year-old cavalry lieutenants and young, harsh subofficers, nay, lance corporals. But it was as though two spirits were speaking in me, one shaping these thoughts into sharp and stinging words, and the other one always comforting me and instantly healing the wounds."

The main success of his intercourse with his comrades is expressed in these words: "I greatly cherished my lowly comrades; and while it were general principles of justice and humanity that had previously led me to the conclusion that I must wholly dedicate myself to the cause of the lowly and despised to obtain a higher life for them, I now want to fight for them out of love. Now, figures, dear friends, who would give their lives for me and who look at me pleadingly, were living in front of me; now I was beginning to see the brutish and wicked ones who can only be tamed with iron rods because in the social conditions of our time, no ray can fall into the gloomy holes the miserables have to inhabit, no good seed can sprout there. How lightning flashed in me when I looked at that dreary wasteland, how my fingers twitched with the desire to form in this human substance, how mild my judgment on the rough and the vile, on thieves and murderers had become, how eagerly the determination to become a William Tell that belongs to no party and goes his own lonely way, a Tell of social freedom, did struggle itself out of my bleeding soul. Be calm, dear brothers in arms, good comrades! A faithful eye watches over you, a sound head thinks for you and two pure hands work for you!"

Here now are two scenes from the beginning of his new career! The philosopher had received his uniform in the armoury and made his way to his quarter: "I looked for a drosky – in vain; nor was there a servant or a porter to be seen anywhere. 'It has to

18 TN: Namely, as he puts it, – "When I was leaving Offenbach, I had to avoid the truth, like a doctor at the sickbed. I had to tell my sister that I needed to serve for only one year. If I had given her full clarity, she would not have been able to bear it. Now too, my disclosure that I still had to serve for two more years would have had terrible consequences. There were also the facts that I was in need of much free time for the revision of the print sheets and that the creative urge was pushing me more and more strongly." (From the autobiography; *Schriften*, vol. 4, p. 433; or p. 1231 of the PDF edition.)

be,' I said, and took heart. I felt just like the Buddha did according to Spence Hardy's narration, when he, the spoilt son of the king, had to eat the begged dirty rice for the first time. But he *ate* it and I *walked*, comforting and straightening myself, like he had comforted and straightened himself. The way was long, and undoubtedly I presented a quite terrible sight. I was loaded like a donkey. On my left arm hung the afternoon buff coat and blue cloth trousers; on the right one the coat, my civilian frock, my civilian trousers and my waistcoat. In the left hand, I held my own boots and a cuirassier hat, in the right one my own hat, two tin boxes and two brushes. In doing so, I thrust the spurs into the boots every few minutes; the long sabre often got in between my legs; the steel helmet swayed on my head, and the blazing sun lay on me."

And a little later, at the beginning of the service: The subofficer sent him away to fill the water barrel. "I obeyed. He was 26 years old, I was 33. I looked for the water bucket and went to the well. From the top floor of the sergeant's house, the veterinary surgeon general's little daughters looked out, giggled and pointed their fingers at the cuirassier with the glasses, dressed in a blue apron, who swayed a little while carrying the two big full buckets of water. And again it spoke within me, 'Let your eyes look straight ahead; do not turn to the right or the left', while I was swallowing a few unborn tears. 'You have taken the form of a servant, like One greater than you. Be steadfast!' And the angels serving me were not missing. Like a dove with outstretched protective wings, the thought of redemption hovered over my soul, and as I was carrying the water, my mind's eye got lost in golden distances full of peace and tranquillity. 'And Buddha thought: Were I to endanger the reception of Buddhaship, how could the various orders of being be released from the sorrow of existence?'" – "And thus I endured all the bitterness, all the wormwood of my new sphere of action, always floating above the lowly occupation by the blissful look at my goal, the brilliant mountaintop in the midst of dark night, until the foaming cup of the free pleasure that lies in a cavalryman's life came to my lips." – "I boldly assert that, as long as there have been soldiers, none of them has ever enjoyed the pleasure, the whole poetry that lies in the life of a cavalryman as purely as I did, because firstly, I could always say to myself, 'You have chosen it without external compulsion,' and further, because I immediately became numb towards the pin-pricks and little miseries of daily monotony by the look at my clear height. This is the blessing that is granted to everyone who renounces the world. On his table are only the delicious free and pure pleasures of life."

The hard service now occupied him completely; he lost sight of his philosophical work as well as all thoughts of home, relatives and current politics; "I became", he remarks, "as Emerson puts it, a victim of the nearest object." "But", he proceeds, "my intellectual life was pulsating quite lively, even though I was not conscious of it. Like a stream in winter, it was flowing on quietly under a sheet of ice. I noticed this clearly when the sheet cracked here and there and an utterly alien thought, an improvement of single points of my work suddenly flashed through my brain like a bolt of lightning in the night." And in March 1875, when he had entirely settled in and become a soldier through and through, – "then the ice cracked everywhere and – the analogy is really fitting – my mind opened and flooded like an ice-covered stream. It was a wild commotion, the thoughts blocked, jostled and rubbed against each other, until finally the sun and moon and stars were reflected again on its ice-free surface, 'wave-breathing'. Then the germinating seed of a *second volume of the Philosophy of Redemption* lay before me: *three* wonderful figures, born during the winter in the veiled, most secret corner of

the mind's workstead, came lovelily to the surface: *true idealism* and the *Christian Trinity* in the bright, warm light of reason and *socialism*."

From the manoeuvre, in which he participated enthusiastically, I will lastly share a sentimental touch of the *human* Mainländer. He occasionally visited a home for blind children with some of his comrades. He was deeply moved. "I felt deep compassion for the children, which, however, was outweighed by interest in what I saw. But it broke through fully when we went to the music room and the Thuringian folk song 'Ach, wie ist's möglich dann …' was sung by girls and boys in two voices. When I looked into those motionless eyes, which had never sensed the charm of light, which had never seen father and mother, never a sunset, never the dawn, – all of mankind's misery overwhelmed me. I thought it would make my heart burst. But as eventually a boy sat down to the organ and played 'Jesus, meine Zuversicht', and I happened to look out of the window while he was playing, seeing officers and the ladies of the house on a veranda in the most cheerful conversation, the awful contrast of rich and poor and the terrible suffering in this world cut into my soul so deeply that I could not contain myself any longer and cried like a child.

> 'μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νι –
> κᾷ λόγον · τὸ δ', ἐπεὶ φνῇ,
> βῆναι κεῖθεν ὅθεν περ ἦ –
> κει, πολὺ δεύτερον, ὡς τάχιστα.'
>
> ['Not to be born, by all acclaim,
> Were best; but once that gate be passed,
> To hasten thither whence he came
> Is man's next prize – and fast, oh fast!'
> (Translation by George Gilbert Aimé Murray)]"

On 1st November 75, after the end of the military year, he arrived in Offenbach. When he returned, he believed that the only things left to do were to organise the proofs of the first volume of *The Philosophy of Redemption* and a few gleanings on the side. "Since no voice spoke in me and there was dead silence outside, I answered the question 'what next?' with a yearning for absolute peace surging up in my heart." But it turned out differently. He revised the manuscript of his work. Then, he began the second half of his autobiography. Then he wrote his first and last novella,[19] entitled "Rupertine del Fino", in ten days, "just because my sister claimed that I could not write a novella." After this, he drafted the entire second volume of *The Philosophy of Redemption* – all of this within just five months. "And while I was writing, the suffocating compassion for mankind was born in my heart; at once, the divine breath within me spoke loud and clear, 'You are not yet used up; you *must* still serve me. Then enter into eternal peace.' Two years ago I had declared to my sister that 'I *cannot* work for the people and the state in any other way than with my pen; my whole nature rebels against plunging into the social turmoil.' Now, a whirlwind drives me into the midst of the people. And even if my own mother rose from the grave and threw herself in my path, I would step over her grey head. Inwardly unyielding, detached from everything, the only thing I still de-

19 I have edited this interesting creation, it is available in manuscript and will expectedly be published in the "Didaskalia" (a supplement to the "Frankfurter Journal").

sire is to have the consciousness of working for humanity: the only water that is able to extinguish the fire of compassion in my breast.

‘The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?’
(David.)

This is my confidence!

‘What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted!
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.’
(Shakespeare.)

This is my weapon!

I step back into the world, all alone, without any chance of success, and yet I know that I will be victorious, because I want nothing but peace of heart.”

Since, as he states at the end, he can only lean on his individuality in the upcoming struggle, he has disclosed only his interior in this diary, as his only weapon, of which he dreamt as gladly as of a wreath of flowers on his grave.

But the step into the world was not taken. It is not clear what made him change his decision and take the other step – go to his death.

The diary ends on 7th March 1876. On the 31st of this month, he held the first volume of his work in his hands. He said, as I have learnt through a reliable verbal message, that his life had lost its purpose. In the night of the 1st of April, he ended his life.[20]

His remains are buried in the Offenbach cemetery.

20 According to the police report, this is the correct date. Mainländer was found hanged. – The idea that he wanted to *seal his teachings* with his suicide is most certainly false – especially considering the last diary entry. There can be no question of that.